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ABSTRACT

This study investigated beginning teachers' perceptions of, preparation for, agreement with, and implementation of Primary School Programs (PSP), one segment of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). In 1993, surveys were mailed to 630 first year primary teachers in Kentucky. The surveys asked about 15 critical attributes of PSP identified by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), including multi-age and multi-ability grouping, developmentally appropriate practice, integrated curriculum, hands-on material, inclusion, performance based assessment, teaming, portfolio assessment, cooperative learning, retention, collaboration, and flexible grouping. The surveys also discussed support the teachers received to implement PSP and degree to which they implemented PSP. Responses from 100 teachers varied widely on preparation for, agreement with, and implementation of individual attributes. Most had received information about KERA during teacher preparation, though 57 said that most of that knowledge was from sources other than their certification programs (teachers, staff development, the media, and KDE materials). Respondents were more likely to implement aspects of PSP for which they felt best prepared and with which they more strongly agreed. Most teachers agreed with hands-on materials and professional collaboration but had problems with student assessment, multi-age grouping, increased inclusion, and retention/promotion issues. Most teachers reported feeling well-supported by the resource teacher during their first year. A figure showing ratings from the respondents regarding the PSP attributes is appended. (Contains 10 references). (SM)

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Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation for, Agreement With and Implementation of Primary School Programs

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ABSTRACT

Survey research investigated beginning teachers' perceptions of preparation for, agreement with, and implementation of Primary School Programs, one segment of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). Results indicated that beginning teachers were more likely to implement aspects of Primary School Programs for which they felt best prepared and with which they more strongly agreed. Respondents felt best prepared to implement strategies that can be simulated and practiced in college classes. KERA-mandated changes are mirrored in other current educational reform efforts and results of this research underscore the need to examine curriculum and delivery systems within teacher preparation programs.

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In 1989 the Kentucky Supreme Court declared the common schools system of Kentucky unconstitutional due to unequal funding. This decision precipitated the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 which legislated widespread changes in curriculum and delivery systems in the state. Many of these changes are part of reform efforts in other school systems as well. Although these changes targeted all levels of education, this study focused on one component of KERA: Primary School Programs (PSP).

According to Kentucky Revised Statute 158.030(2): "Primary School Program is that part of the elementary school program in which children are enrolled from the time they begin school until they are ready to enter fourth grade. Notwithstanding any statute to the contrary, successful completion of the primary school program shall be a prerequisite for a child's entrance into fourth grade."

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) identified seven critical attributes of Primary School Programs in Kentucky. These critical attributes serve as guides for educational reform, and concur with National Association for the Education of Young Children guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987) regarding the education of young children. The seven critical attributes of Kentucky's PSP are: developmentally appropriate practices; multiage/ multiability groupings; continuous progress, or noncompetitive, individually-paced instruction; authentic assessment; qualitative reporting methods; professional teamwork; and positive parent involvement.

The 1992-93 school year was the first year in which each elementary school in Kentucky must have begun implementation of a PSP; full implementation was mandated in 1993-1994. Because full KERA implementation is still in progress, there is limited research available regarding the success of this reform. The research available is of two types: survey and observational.

Hovda (1992) surveyed teachers' and administrators' understandings and attitudes regarding PSP prior to the 1992-93 school year. Hovda found teachers and principals held generally positive attitudes about the reform, although some indicated misunderstandings relative to the mandates. He noted that the majority of respondents felt they could implement

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KERA mandates appropriately. These positive attitudes were echoed in de Mesquita's data (de Mesquita & Townley, 1993; de Mesquita & Drake, 1993). Teachers in de Mesquita's and Townley's study indicated that they would prefer a slower implementation timeline so that changes could occur consecutively rather than simultaneously, a suggestion also made by teachers in a study by Raths, Katz, and Fanning (1992). Teachers in the de Mesquita and Drake study also expressed concern over the pace of implementation, with over 83% of respondents indicating the need for professional development and retraining. These teachers were particularly concerned about conducting authentic assessments, monitoring continuous progress, developing qualitative reporting methods, and forming multiage/multiability groupings. In spite of these expressed concerns, over half of the teachers participating in this study said they preferred teaching in PSP to teaching in more traditional elementary arrangements.

Interestingly, de Mesquita and Drake also found that less experienced teachers tended to be more knowledgeable about KERA mandates than teachers with more teaching experience. Those respondents with the least and most experience tended to be more positive about changes brought about by the reform than those teachers who might be considered in the middle of their career.

While the above mentioned studies focused primarily on understandings and opinions related to Primary School Program mandates, others have been conducted relating to the implementation of KERA mandates within PSP. Some of these observational studies involved samplings from several sites representing diversity across the state, while others provided more in-depth description of progress at a single site. From these research efforts, one can conclude that progress is being made in all areas of implementation, although the rate of progress varies greatly. For example, there continues to be much debate over multiage/ multiability groupings and the inclusion of kindergartners within these primary groupings is particularly controversial (Appalachian Educational Laboratory, 1993; de Mesquita & Drake, 1993; Raths, et al. 1992). Researchers have found much variation in the interpretation of what constitutes "developmentally appropriate practices" in classrooms they have observed. For example, Bridge (1994) observed in randomly selected classrooms and found that teach-

ers were having difficulty using learning centers and thematic studies appropriately. In some classrooms the learning centers were very much teacher directed and were not an integral part of instruction; the topics for thematic studies were neither developmentally appropriate nor consistent with the goals of KERA.

Support for change was listed as a critical factor by many researchers. The Appalachian Educational Laboratory (1993) study indicated that support from the building principal was an essential condition to enable teachers to make these changes. Similarly, Kyle and McIntyre (1992) found the two building principals in their longitudinal study to be particularly helpful in rescheduling the school day so that teachers could have common planning time and work on collaborative projects. Most studies indicate positive attitudes and actions with respect to collaboration among teachers and between teachers and parents (e.g., Bridge et al., 1994; Kyle & McIntyre, 1993; Raths, Katz, & Fanning, 1992).

The research mentioned previously is enlightening as further KERA-related studies are planned. In the particular study described here, the work of de Mesquita and Drake (1993) was influential. As previously mentioned, these researchers found beginning teachers and end-of-career teachers to be most enthusiastic about the changes brought about by KERA. We were intrigued by these findings, and wanted to further investigate the issue relative to beginning teachers.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which beginning teachers during the 1992-1993 school year agreed with and were implementing the critical attributes of Primary School Programs. Also of interest were the perceptions of beginning teachers regarding the adequacy of their teacher training programs in preparing them to implement KERA since teacher preparation would have occurred for this group before or during the first year after the passage of the reform act. An additional purpose of the study was to investigate the possible relationships among specific aspects of teacher training programs, interns' agreement with and implementation of the critical attributes of Primary School Programs.

METHOD

Subjects

The Kentucky Beginning Teacher Internship Program (KBTIP), which preceded KERA, assigns a three-member team — an administrator, usually a school principal; a classroom teacher, called the resource teacher; and, a teacher educator — to assist each intern during the school year and to determine at the end of the year if the intern should be given a Provisional Certificate. Under KBTIP, interns are teachers in their first year of full-time teaching in Kentucky, and who have less than two full years teaching experience at an accredited school.

A list of interns teaching in elementary schools was solicited from the Kentucky Department of Education. The Kentucky Department of Education does not sort such lists by grade level nor did the list obtained for this study include special education teachers. Therefore, the list used included all regular classroom teachers completing an internship year in any facility serving elementary students. From this list, all teachers in nonpublic settings were excluded, since private schools are not under KERA mandates. Next, interns in all schools termed "intermediate" or "middle" were excluded. Because elementary schools may have differing organizations (e.g., K-3, K-5, K-8, pre K-6), the resulting list included interns who were not presently teaching in PSP.

Surveys were mailed to interns in April, 1993. The timing of the mailing was purposeful in that most interns would have had several months of experience on which to base their responses although it is possible that some might have been hired for the second half of the school year. Returns were requested by May 15, 1993.

Six hundred thirty surveys were mailed to interns in public elementary schools across the state. One survey was returned as nondeliverable. Of the remaining 629 surveys, 192 (31%) were returned by mail. Seventy-three of these surveys indicated either that the Intern was not an elementary teacher or was teaching in an upper elementary grade; 119 respondents indicated that they were presently teaching in a primary setting (K - 3). One hundred of these respondents were trained at institutions within Kentucky, while 19 received their teacher

training outside the state. Respondents were representative of all geographical areas of the state.

Kentucky-trained primary school interns (N = 100) responding to this survey had a mean age of 28 years (range 22 - 48); 97% were female. Bachelors degrees were the highest degrees earned by 90% of the respondents; 9% held masters degrees. The majority of respondents (87%) indicated that they had received certification for K-grade 4 through a bachelors program; an additional 7% completed their work in a masters-with-initial-certification (MIC) program.

Fifty-seven percent of these interns were employed in rural schools, while 24% and 19% were employed in urban and suburban schools, respectively. Eighteen respondents had taught prior to the internship year, although 12 had only one year previous experience. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that their internship year involved teaching in a multiage/multiability classroom. Fifty-two interns indicated that they were involved in a team teaching format; responses suggested that most teams (90%) were comprised of two to four teachers.

Procedure

A code book was created to provide numerical equivalents for responses to categorical variables. Text files were created for narrative comments. Teams of two were used for data entry—one person read while the other entered information on the computer. Ten percent of the files were randomly selected for a reliability check. An individual who did not enter the data completed the checking. Reliability of data entry was 99% based on a point-by-point comparison. Data were analyzed for descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients using the SAS package.

Instrument Description

The survey instrument used in this research contained a total of 305 variables. Variables focused on the critical attributes of Primary School Programs (PSP) identified by the Kentucky Department of Education. Broad attributes, for example multiage/multiability groupings, were broken down into separate items to provide more detail. Items were added

to this list to address specific areas of the curriculum (i.e., science, social studies, etc.). All responses were made on Likert scales, with spaces provided for comments in each area. One section asked interns to rate the effectiveness of their training programs and indicate the nature of their preparation relative to the critical attributes. Another section dealt with interns' agreement with the attributes. A third section of the survey asked interns to rate various types of support they may have received to help implement PSP during their internship year. Additionally, interns were asked to rate their access to various types of resources and support during the internship year. In another section, interns were to indicate the degree to which they were currently implementing the 15 attributes.

A final survey item solicited demographic information. Although responses to the survey were anonymous, descriptive information such as geographical area in which they were teaching, and highest degree earned was included to help summarize responses and detect any possible patterns.

RESULTS

Responses from interns indicated that in 89 out of 100 cases, their teacher preparation programs included information about KERA; however, 57 interns reported that most of their knowledge of KERA was from sources other than their certification programs. The sources mentioned most frequently were other teachers, staff development, the media, and KDE materials. The remainder of this section provides findings specific to one aspect of KERA: Primary School Programs (PSP).

Interns' Perceptions of Teacher Preparation Programs

When asked how well their certification program prepared them for their first year of teaching, only 5% of the 100 respondents considered their preparation to be excellent. Another 60% judged their preparation to be of some help, and 35% thought their certification program had not prepared them well for their first year of teaching in a PSP. Interns also described the nature of their exposure to attributes during their preparation programs, and these responses appear in Table 1.

Table 1
Number of Interns Reporting Experiences with Attributes of Primary Programs During Their Teacher Preparation Programs (N=100)

	TYPE OF EXPERIENCE					
Attribute	**Briefly described in class**	**Described in detail in class**	**Practiced in class**	**Observed in field experience**	**Practice in field experience**	**Not part of class or field experience**
Multi-age grouping	47	25	21	29	29	23
Multi-ability grouping	47	30	24	41	39	13
Developmentally appropriate practice	25	48	37	41	52	8
Integrated curriculum	28	44	45	47	53	8
Emphasis on application of concepts; less emphasis on skill development	32	30	32	23	34	19
Thematic units	24	48	57	46	61	7
Emphasis on hands-on material	12	67	65	59	75	3
Inclusion of children with disabilities	35	49	18	38	29	6
Performance based assessment	44	17	12	17	19	31
Professional teaming for instruction	39	17	14	25	23	29
Portfolios for assessment	34	15	14	21	23	39
Cooperative learning	31	48	54	50	57	10
No retention/ promotion Years 1-4	27	16	10	8	12	45
Collaboration with others	33	24	23	34	39	21
Use of flexible grouping strategies; no static instructional groups	31	24	18	26	30	30

Note. The survey instrument instructed respondents to check all categories that applied to their teacher preparation programs. The number of individuals responding was 100, but row totals may exceed 100.

Relative to their preparation for implementing specific attributes of primary school programs (see Figure 1 in Appendix A), interns felt best prepared to emphasize the use of hands-on material, with 75% of respondents indicating that their certification program was "very effective" and 21% indicating it was "somewhat effective" for this dimension. The attributes interns felt best prepared to implement, in order, were: emphasis on hands-on material, thematic units, cooperative learning, integrated curriculum, developmentally appropriate practice, and emphasis on the application of concepts. All of these relate to curriculum strategies and can be simulated and practiced in college classes. The attributes students felt least prepared to implement (e.g., collaboration with others and professional teaming; flexible, multiability and multiage grouping; performance based assessment and use of portfolios;

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and, no retention/no promotion) have to do with working with other professionals, grouping of students and assessment of students, primarily tasks for which it may be difficult to provide realistic simulations within the context of university courses.

Interns also were asked to judge the effectiveness of their certification program in preparing them to teach the four basic content areas: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Table 2 indicates that respondents rated their preparation in language arts and mathematics higher than science and social studies. In fact, the only attribute for which interns felt their training was more effective than for language arts, mathematics or science, was an emphasis on hands-on materials. The effectiveness of preparation in both thematic units and cooperative learning was rated higher than that for teaching social studies.

Table 2
Interns' Ratings of Their Preparation for Teaching in Four Areas of Curriculum

Curricular Area	Ratings of Effectiveness of Preparation			
	Very	Somewhat	Not	No Response
Language Arts	64	30	3	3
Mathematics	64	31	3	2
Science	55	40	4	1
Social Studies	47	36	16	1

When asked, if they had a choice would they teach in a primary school program the next year, 85% responded in the affirmative; 13% responded negatively; 2% did not respond.

Interns were asked, using open-ended questions, what changes they would make if they could change their preparation program in ways that would better prepare one for the first year of teaching in a PSP. Ninety-five interns responded, many with multiple suggestions. Five interns wrote only positive comments about their preparation. Sixteen interns stated that they had graduated prior to the passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Some of their comments were based on their preparation; some on what they thought begin-

ning teachers needed in a quality program. Following are the ten most frequently mentioned areas for improvement:

1. Field experiences (e.g., more, longer student teaching, experiences in low-socioeconomic level schools, field experiences earlier in the program, experiences at a variety of grade levels, sitting in on teacher planning and discussions during field experiences, and, the most frequent specification relative to field experiences, experiences in model primary classrooms) - 26 responses.
2. Assessment (performance based, portfolio, anecdotal) - 17 responses.
3. Multiage classes (designing and implementing curriculum, more field experiences in multiage classrooms) - 13 responses.
4. Thematic units - 11 responses.
5. Discipline - 10 responses.
6. Integrated curriculum - 8 responses.
7. Time management, record keeping, routines - 8 responses.
8. Regulations (KERA, Learner Outcomes, Best Practices) - 5 responses.
9. Mainstreaming - 5 responses.
10. More practical knowledge, less theory (more experience with hands-on activities in college classes) - 5 responses.

Support Received During Internship Year

Interns were asked about the source and effectiveness of support they received to help them implement Primary School Programs during their internship year. The questionnaire surveyed interns' support from administrators, colleagues, parents, the community, and in-service; response options included support being "available and useful," "available but not sufficient," "available but not useful," "not available," and "not important to me." The Kentucky Beginning Teacher Internship Program, which preceded KERA, assigns a three-member team — an administrator, usually a school principal; a classroom teacher, called the resource teacher; and, a teacher educator — to assist the Intern during the school year and to determine at the end of the year if the Intern should be given a Provisional Certificate. Not

surprising, 88% of the interns responding to the questionnaire reported that support from the resource teacher was available and useful; an additional 11% found support from the resource teacher to be available but not sufficient or not useful. None thought support of the internship team was not important. Not surprisingly, of their colleagues, interns found fellow primary teachers' support to be most available and useful (87%). Over three-fourths of the respondents felt that individual parents and parent organizations were available and provided useful support.

It was somewhat unexpected that 35% and 29% of the respondents found support from the superintendent and school board, respectively, to be available and useful; an additional 26% and 30% found support from the superintendent and school board, respectively, to be available but not sufficient or not useful. Other unexpected responses regarded support from the community; 89% of the 100 interns felt they received support from the media, with 43% indicating that the support was useful. Thirty-one percent of the interns felt they received useful support from the business community; an additional 43% judged support they received from the business community to be insufficient or not useful.

An interesting pattern emerged in the responses regarding inservice, which was apparently delivered by many individuals and groups. Data indicated that interns felt they received the greatest help from inservice conducted by faculty in their school (69%), educators from other schools (57%), the principal in their school (54%), and school district personnel (49%). An objective of KERA was to empower teachers to take more responsibility for choosing and developing curriculum and for acquiring the information and expertise to fully implement changes mandated by KERA. Training provided by the State Department of Education and most universities used a trainer-of-trainer models. The primary goal of institutes and statewide conferences was to train representatives from a number of school districts with the expectation that those teachers and principals would then conduct inservice in their own school or district. Since KERA mandated changes for all elementary teachers statewide, this model seemed the most efficient. One might infer from the data of this survey that the model achieved that goal.

Agreement With Attributes of Primary Programs

Interns were asked to rate their level of agreement with each attribute of the Primary School Program. Results in Figure 1 indicate variability in levels of agreement across the attributes. There were two attributes with unanimous support among respondents; all interns indicated high or moderate levels of agreement for the use of hands-on materials and thematic units. Over 80% of the interns indicated a high level of agreement for both hands-on materials and collaboration with other professionals. There were four attributes to which more than 10% of the interns expressed opposition: no retention/no promotion (20%), multiage grouping (15%), increased mainstreaming (14%), and, portfolios for assessment (13%). Interns who opposed any of the attributes were asked to explain their opposition. The majority of explanations for opposition to no retention/no promotion reflected a misunderstanding of the concept. Comments indicated that some respondents interpreted this attribute to mean that students would not be allowed to proceed to more difficult material if they were capable. The extent of this misunderstanding later led KDE to relabel this attribute "continuous progress". Other respondents commented that parents would not be adequately informed about students' lack of understanding and be surprised when they were not promoted to fourth grade.

About half of those opposed to multiage grouping expressed concern about including kindergartners with older students; the other half felt that there was too wide a range of differences when three "grade levels" were in one classroom. It should be understood that not all schools combined three "grade levels"; some combined only two. Those opposed to increasing mainstreaming fell into two camps: those concerned that they were not adequately trained to teach children with special needs and those who felt that mainstreamed children take attention away from other students.

Rationales for opposition to portfolios were mixed but centered primarily around the observations that students were being "turned off" or "burned out" on writing, that they no longer enjoyed writing. Currently, fourth grade teachers are required and primary teachers are encouraged to keep portfolios on each student. Portfolios should include examples of students' best work which may be demonstrated in many forms, written, video, and so forth.

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In fact, it is nearly always in written form, usually edited and rewritten several times. Students write to indicate what they have learned or done in science, for example, as well as writing creative works.

Degree of Implementation of Attributes of Primary School Programs

Respondents to the survey gave self-assessments of the degree to which they were implementing attributes of Primary School Programs. The survey provided response options ranging from "to a large extent," "somewhat," and "not at all." Interns' responses are summarized within Figure 1. One attribute, use of hands-on materials, was implemented by all 100 interns and was the only attribute for which all interns reported at least some degree of implementation. Attributes implemented by 95 or more interns included integrated curriculum, thematic units, cooperative learning, developmentally appropriate practices, multiability grouping, emphasis on application of concepts, and performance-based assessment. Attributes for which the lowest degrees of implementation were reported included no retention/ promotion, increased mainstreaming, and professional teaming.

Relationships Among Effectiveness, Agreement and Implementation

Pearson correlations were run to analyze the relationships among interns' responses relative to their training effectiveness, agreement with, and implementation of these critical attributes. An index score for effectiveness, one for agreement, and one for implementation were derived by assigning a numeric variable to each rating, averaging the ratings across attributes, and multiplying the mean by ten. These index scores were used in calculating correlation coefficients for the three comparisons. Scatter plots indicated that all correlations were linear. Ratings for all attributes resulted in significant ($p<.01$) correlations for at least two variables. There were significant correlations between the index scores for effectiveness and agreement ($r=.42$), effectiveness and implementation ($r=.27$), and agreement and implementation ($r=.39$). Also significant ($p<.01$) and positive were correlations of effectiveness, agreement and implementation for the following attributes: integrated curriculum, application of concepts, thematic units, performance based assessment, cooperative learning, professional collaborations, and flexible grouping. All significant correlations between variables for these

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attributes were positive and in the moderate to high range. Thus, it appears that interns were more likely to implement attributes with which they agreed and for which they felt best prepared.

The only negative correlation in the entire data set was the relationship between effectiveness of training and degree of implementation for multiage grouping. While this correlation was low and nonsignificant, it does further underscore the complexity of this attribute, as previously described.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This survey of teachers during their intern year was conducted during the early, turbulent stages of educational reform in Kentucky and focused on one aspect of that reform effort, Primary School Programs. This study has several limitations, one of which is common to all survey research, and that is the inevitable self-selection of respondents. A second limitation is that interns' reports of experiences during their teacher preparation programs are self-reports, and as such these data are affected by factors such as memory, absences from class or field experience, level of attention during class, and the degree to which reading assignments were completed. Additionally, the survey featured labels for attributes found in KERA documents produced by the Kentucky Department of Education; the survey instrument did not include detailed definitions of each attribute. It may be possible that some respondents did not interpret an attribute in the way in which it was intended.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that several interns from this sample were not recent graduates and completed their teacher preparation programs before the passage of the reform act. Most of the interns graduated during the transition period when the law was being translated into specific regulations and procedures and before universities had had much time to incorporate KERA mandates into their preparation programs. While interns likely had the most up-to-date training among professionals in schools, it is not safe to assume that interns were well-versed in all aspects of PSP. Results indicated a moderate, positive correlation among preparation for, agreement with, and implementation of attributes of PSP. The

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speed with which the reform act was passed and the accelerated timeline for implementation may have caused some interns to experience mismatches between their teacher preparation programs and the requirements they faced during their first year of teaching. When interns reported the types of preparation they had for each of the attributes, a relatively high number of individuals reported that particular attributes were not part of a class or field experience. For example, there was no attribute for which 100% of the interns reported exposure to the concept or practice during class or field experience. Conversely, there was no attribute of PSP that all teacher preparation programs as represented by the interns failed to address.

The results of the survey offer a snapshot of reactions among teacher interns who responded to the survey during the last two months of their first year of teaching. Although attributes of PSP are presented as a comprehensive model, interns' responses varied widely on preparation for, agreement with, and implementation of individual attributes. These findings suggest several interpretations. First, it may be unrealistic to expect that preparation, agreement, and implementation should all appear at equally high levels on all attributes. Second, degrees of preparation, agreement, and implementation are probably dynamic and thus these levels would be expected to change with additional experience and training. A follow-up study should be conducted to determine if this variability persists.

The speed with which reforms were mandated also created problems in terms of the availability of appropriate field experiences for preservice teachers. Many interns commented that the way in which they would change their preparation programs involved additional field experience in multiaged/multiability PSP, and several interns wrote that they realized the difficulty of trying to prepare teachers for practices that were not yet widely used within the public schools. This phenomenon is likely to repeat itself any time a reform effort specifies instructional arrangements and procedures that are not widely used in schools.

This lag between mandated, state-wide education reform and school implementation calls for creative solutions from teacher educators, especially during early transitional stages of reform efforts. There may be a need to rely more heavily on simulations, videotapes, and other campus-based instructional options until sufficient numbers of classroom teachers

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implement the reforms in sites available for field experiences. The use of anchored instruction, including applications of interactive video and multimedia, may provide other strategies for teacher educators. In this method, brief video vignettes are used as examples and are integrated into instructional programs to develop a common frame of reference. Pape and McIntyre (1992) used an interactive videodisc program that incorporated anchored instruction to "improve novice teachers' understanding and use of theoretical knowledge" (p. 6). Also, teacher educators may find it beneficial to collaborate with nearby schools in the actual development of field experience sites. This may be accomplished by intense, long-term staff preparation that supports use of best practices related to reforms.

The area of student assessment (both portfolios and performance-based procedures) was especially problematic for many interns, a finding that is consistent with those of previous research on KERA (Bridge, 1994; Bridge et al, 1994; de Mesquita & Drake, 1993; de Mesquita & Townley, 1993). This may be related not only to the sweeping changes mandated in this area, but also to the fact that the Kentucky Department of Education continued to refine the concepts and procedures related to the assessment program during the 1992-1993 school year. In some respects, both teacher educators and classroom teachers were dealing with a "moving target" when they attempted to define and implement assessment procedures required by the reform act.

Another area in which interns reported particular difficulty was that of multiage grouping, and this also is consistent with the findings of Bridge (1994), Bridge et al (1994), and de Mesquita and Drake (1993). Again, some of this may be related to a lack of clarity regarding the requirements for this aspect of the reform. Some respondents' comments indicated that their interpretation of the multiage grouping requirement meant that children ages 5 through 9 years were to be placed in the same classroom. This was not the legal requirement; the KERA does not specify a specific age range and only requires "the flexible grouping and regrouping of children of different ages, sex, and abilities who may be assigned to the same teacher(s) for more than one year" (Kentucky Department of Education, 1993, p.6). During the same school year in which this survey was conducted the KDE issued docu-

ments intended to clarify the multiage grouping attribute. Obviously, the staff at KDE were responding to questions and concerns among school personnel when they issued clarifications. This situation is one example of how ideas regarding the Primary School Program and other aspects of reform are evolving and how classroom teachers must deal with a certain level of ambiguity during the reform process. The situation also points to the need for clear communication among classroom teachers, staff development providers, teacher educators, and state departments of education staff regarding practices that are required by law and practices that are recommendations.

Results of this survey of interns indicate that one should not assume that beginning teachers with the most recent preparation are fully prepared to implement all aspects of reform, in this case PSP reform. This may be a temporary situation and one that may be reasonable to expect as both teacher preparation programs and public schools make the transition to Primary School Programs. While interns did report some encouraging news regarding their preparation for PSP, their levels of agreement with and implementation of the attributes of Primary Programs, it is clear that this group of interns will need additional support in terms of professional development, continuing formal education, and experience if they are to implement all of the key attributes in a comprehensive manner. At the same time, educational researchers (including classroom teachers) should evaluate the effects of PSP for young children and use findings to make data-based decisions regarding the overall model and its attributes. The possibility exists that some components of PSP may not actually represent procedures that will be effective for <u>all</u> learners, and thus careful evaluation of the effects of education reform remains a critical part of the process of improving public schools.

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Appendix A

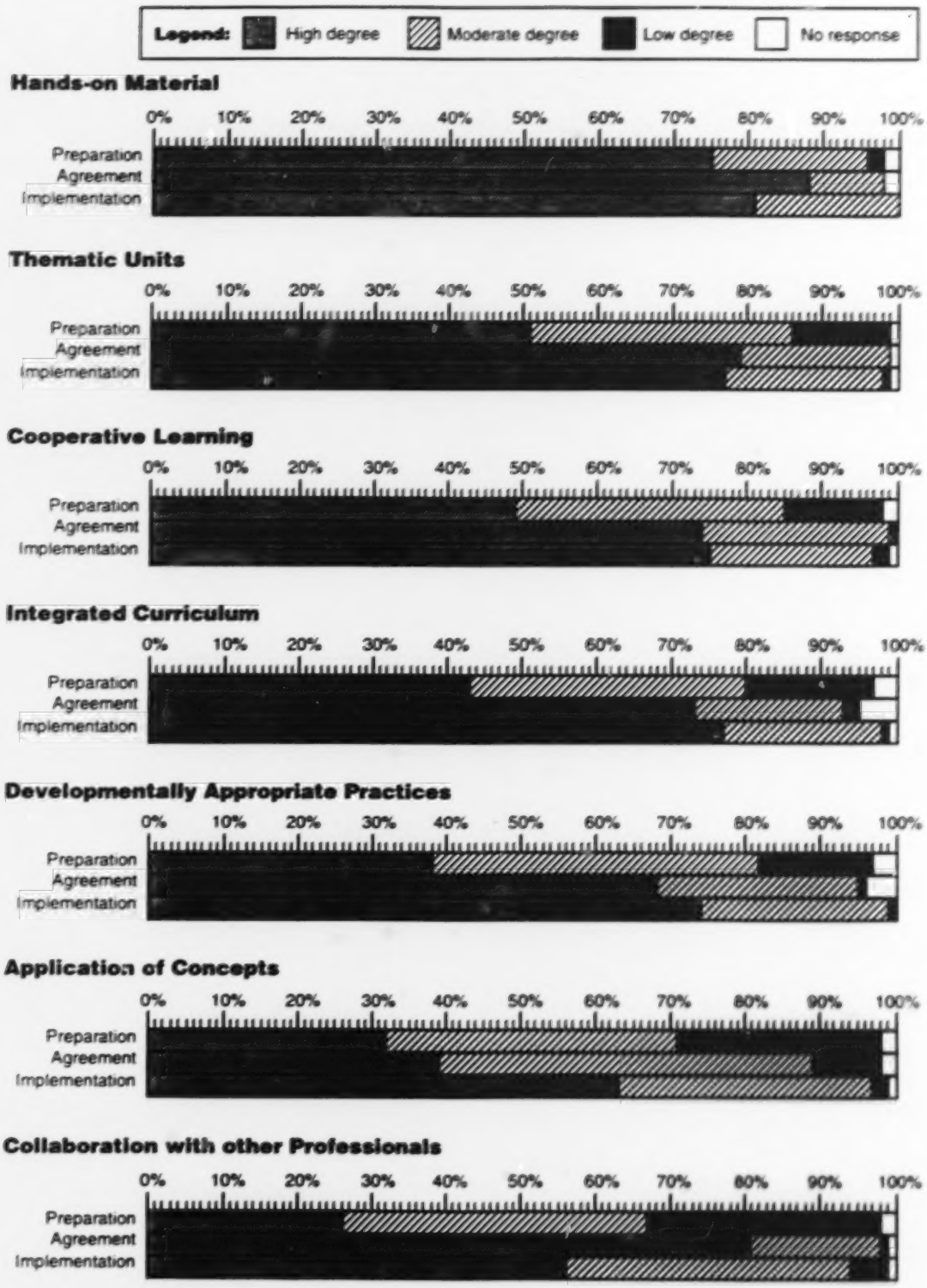

Figure 1. Ratings from 100 interns regarding attributes of Kentucky's Primary Program and the effectiveness of their teacher preparation programs, levels of agreement, and degrees of implementation.

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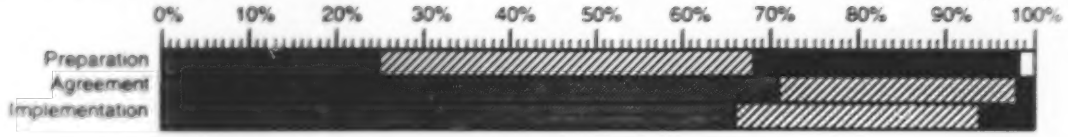
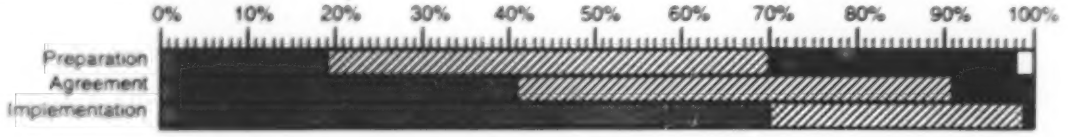
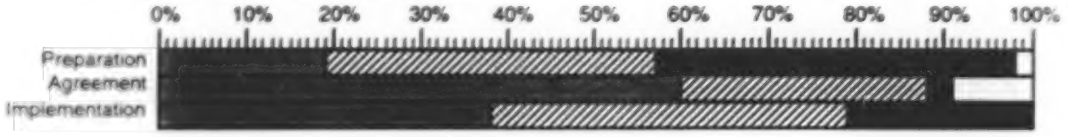
Flexible Grouping Strategies



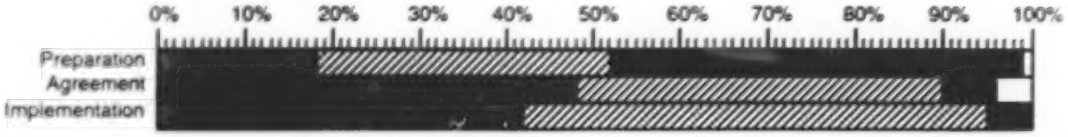
Multi-ability Grouping



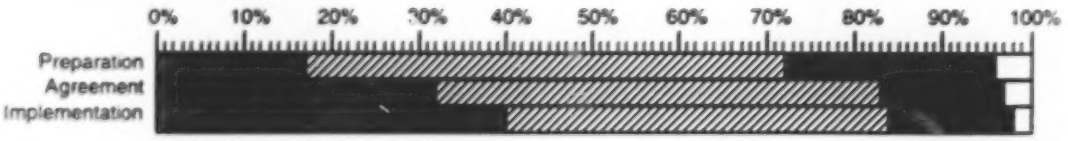
Professional Teaming for Instruction



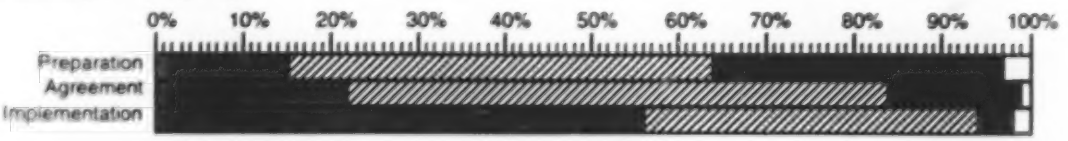
Performance Based Assessment



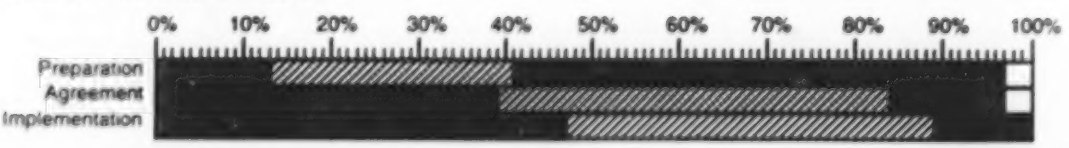
Increased Mainstreaming



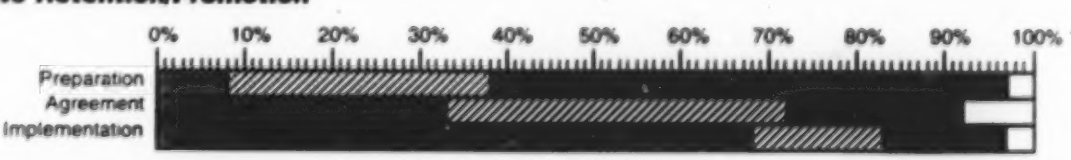
Multi-age Grouping



Portfolios for Assessment



No Retention/Promotion



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